The POINT Library
(A collection of pointers)

PRELIMINARY IDEAS

Introduction

By collating, cataloging, filing and computerizing information on the collection of books and periodical POINT has amassed and reviewed over the past twenty odd years, we could create a powerful library that would not only help POINT staff and our current supporters, but people throughout the Bay Area and beyond who are searching for information, pointers and/or interpersonal discussion.

This library would not only be a place for books and periodicals POINT publications have reviewed in the past, but a location where ideas could be shared and communities fostered. Not only would the library house our vast collection of environmental, cultural and technical printed works but it also could serve as host for a variety of classes, discussions and/or salon-type meetings.

POINT library as Research Facility

Sphere of interest

Over the past twenty-odd years POINT has collected, and reviewed, over 7,000 books and periodicals on a variety of topics from manure to CRTs and these works are now stored at the Whole Earth offices ready to be catalogued.

Among the fields of interest which have been reviewed in past issues of *Whole Earth Review* and *CoEvolution Quarterly* are the Environment, Medicine, Spirituality, Self-Help, Carpentry and other "How-To" works than give individuals the power to have control over the quality of their lives.

If properly cataloged, sorted and filed, this collection could truly be a great asset to researchers in a variety of fields. In this era of environmental concern, for instance, a researcher could come to the POINT library and read about what has already been done in different areas rather than spending time reinventing the wheel.

On-Line Links to other Libraries

Rather than keeping our information to ourselves, we would like to hook into an on-line system such as that of the Marin Community Library to let others know what books, magazines and/or other source material can help them in their research. Opening our shelves to users throughout the Bay area could bring in new supporters of POINT while helping individuals and organizations locate vital research information.

Questions:

- Should this be a "Private" Library with a fee structure?
- What kind of fees could be charged?
- Who would monitor the library usage?
- Should we link up only with Marin Community Library? Look to other Bay Area systems?
- What kind of financial assistance could we secure for establishing links? From whom?

POINT library as Host

Classes

Having POINT supporters who are experts in many fields of endeavor, the library could be used as a place to hold classes taught by these authorities. Bringing in Gail Delaney to teach a course on dreams, J. Baldwin to enlighten us about design and/or tools, or Stewart Brand to hold forth on any of his many interests could bring enlightenment to the student while helping the library financially.

Discussions

Much like the WELL, people could Host conferences at the library and the public could be invited to participate. A person who has met others through the WELL, for instance, who share an interest in classical music could hold a session at the library where these folks (and others) could listen to music and then discuss its merits.

Salon-Type Sessions

On a more informal level, the Library could become a place that people would think of as a "drop in" site, knowing other interesting folks would be around and lively discussions could ensue. For instance, if the library was open every other Sunday afternoon and people could just drop in for conversation, discussion or just companionship, POINT could further its goal of perpetuating communities.

Questions

- What kinds of classes should be held? Discussions? Sessions?
- What fees could be charged for each?
- Who would "host" individual sessions? Classes? Discussions?
- Could library space be rented out to other organizations for meetings?
- Who would be in charge of scheduling?

PHYSICAL LAYOUT / CONSIDERATIONS

Current Office Space

Before POINT invests too much money in creating a multi-use library, its office space status has to be considered. One possible option is to put the library in one of the offices now occupied by the WELL, but if this is just a temporary measure POINT has to decide how much to invest on it.

Future Considerations

If a new office location is chosen in the future, and POINT decides to invest in a multi-use library, substantial planning should be done concerning efficient library design and its use. Some issues which must be considered are whether conference rooms should be incorporated into the library design, or whether we just want a standard library.

Questions

- Is it worth doing renovation if we're going to move?
- How much should POINT invest now if our future location is unclear?
- Do we want a conference area in the library?
- What kind of conference area would be designed? Formal? Informal? Both?

MISC.

In -House Benefits

An organized library with a complete collection, comprehensive catalog and efficient check-out system could certainly help all POINT employees with research questions.

IF POINT decides to embark on a central database and customer support project, this process could be even more important as customers will be paying us for our ability to rapidly, and effectively, retrieve data. A complete collection would also be beneficial in the production of future Whole Earth books and CD-Rom updates.

Profitability (short-term / long-term)

While it would require a substantial initial financial outlay, POINT would probably find both short- and long- term benefits from the creation of a working library. In terms of ease of data retrieval this would be seen quickly, but in terms of future POINT supporters we might bring in the return would probably be slower in making itself evident but just as important.

Questions

- Will a library only benefit POINT? Will anyone else use it??
- How can we get foundation/corporate support for this venture?

CONCLUSION

POINT has amassed a vast collection of material which could now help help others with specific research on a wide range of issues. For instance, rather than reinventing the wheel, or falling prey to the same problems others have already successfully solved, communities or individuals who are ready to work on environmental issues such as toxic waste or agricultural productivity should be offered the opportunity to browse through the material on hand at POINT.

This library could be a complement to, and in conjunction with, the Marin County Library system and/or other Bay area systems. Before this collection can be opened up to the public for use however, it must be cataloged and sorted so that material can be retrieved by number or subject. Also a computer interface must be built linking the POINT Library to other library systems so that all library visitors can utilize this material.

Beyond this cataloging and interface process, the POINT Library could also serve as community perpetuator in the ways sited above. As a place where people could join and share information the POINT library could symbolize what POINT is about.

However before we embark on this project, many of the questions sited above have to be answered, tasks assigned, a budget drawn up and support sought. Therefore I would suggest we initialize a feasibility study as soon as possible to see whether this project is a yes or no.